

PRESS RELEASE

Colorado Department of Law
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**ATTORNEY GENERAL, SECRETARY OF STATE AND AARP ELDERWATCH WARN
COLORADANS TO BEWARE OF FALSE CHARITY SCAMS AFTER QUAKE, TSUNAMI**

DENVER — Colorado Attorney General John Suthers has joined today with Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler and AARP ElderWatch to warn Coloradans to beware of scams trying to exploit the earthquake and tsunami in Japan as a means to steal their money.

“Although we have not yet received any complaints from consumers, experience tells us that scam artists are quite adept at exploiting current events and natural disasters to prey on consumers desire to help,” Suthers said. “Consumers should always check out any charities soliciting donations.”

“Traditionally, Coloradans have generously contributed to legitimate and worthwhile causes,” Gessler said. “This same spirit of giving should continue only after checking the charity’s financials and following our wise giving tips.”

Coloradans can take several simple steps to make sure that their charitable contributions are helping disaster victims and not lining the pockets of scam artists:

- Visit the www.checkthecharity.com or the Colorado Secretary of State’s Web site, www.sos.state.co.us, to make sure a charity soliciting contributions is registered with the state.
- Seniors can contact AARP ElderWatch via the Colorado Consumer Line, 1-800-222-4444, for more information on charity fraud.
- Ask for the solicitor’s registration number and the registration number of the charity he or she is representing.
- If the charity is required to file the federal form 990 or 990-EZ with the IRS, ask to see it.
- Ask your tax advisor or the Internal Revenue Service if your donation will be tax deductible. The fact that a charity has a tax identification number does not necessarily mean your contribution is tax-deductible.
- Ask the solicitor how much or what percentage of the donation will go to the charity.
- Be wary if the charity does not want to provide information about its programs and finances. Reputable charities will gladly provide the information requested.
- Watch out for charities with names that sound similar to well-known organizations. Sometimes these sound-alike names are simply intended to confuse donors.
- Do not pay in cash. Donate with a check made payable to the charity.
- If solicited in person, ask to see identification for both the solicitor and the charity.
- Certain well-known charities such as the Red Cross will never solicit donations over the phone.
- Beware of unsolicited e-mail. There have already been reports of e-mail that purport to be solicitations from the Red Cross. The e-mails have links embedded in them that will take you to a fake Red Cross Web site. Further, such unsolicited e-mail may spread computer viruses. Do not respond to any e-mail soliciting donations from any organization. Instead, go directly to the organization’s Web site or call to make donations.

To keep apprised of the latest scams and tips on how not to become a victim, sign up for the Office of the Attorney General’s fraud awareness newsletter at www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/fraudawareness. If

consumers believe they have encountered a fraudulent charitable solicitation, they can file a complaint via www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/complaint.